

# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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# SPECIAL ARTICLES

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF MARYLAND BIRDS

This is the third in a series of papers written for the purpose of presenting new information on the geographical distribution and abundance of Maryland birds. Four species are treated this time, as follows:

### RAZOR-BILLED AUK (Alca torda)

One bird was seen in the surf near the Isle of Wight coast guard station on February 3, 1938, by John H. Buckalew. This represents the second record of this species in Maryland, the first having been made by Wetmore and Preble at Ocean City on December 4, 1926. As a result of the second sight record, this species may be placed on the regular list, bringing the State total to 310 species.

### STILT SANDPIPER (Micropalama himantopus)

Observations during the past three years by John H. Buckalew, C. S. Robbins and R. E. Stewart show that this species is a regular and at times a fairly common fall transient along the coast. Records include 13 seen on July 26, 1947, and 14 on August 23, 1947 at Assateague Island; three on August 24, 1947, at the Blackwater Refuge; and two at West Ocean City on August 24, 1946.

### CLIFF SWALLOW (Petrochelidon pyrrhonota)

Recent observations by Orville Crowder, Leonard M. Llewellyn, Mrs. Helen Miller, C. S. Robbins, R. E. Stewart and Kenneth Wilson show that this species occurs as a local summer resident throughout Garrett and Allegany Counties and in the western part of Washington County. The eastern-most colony recorded was located on Great Tonoloway Creek in Washington County, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Hancock. Formerly, this species occurred regularly as a summer resident in one section of Baltimore County (Kirkwood, 1895 - "The Birds of Maryland").

### SHORT BILLED MARSH WREN (Gistothorus platensis)

Numerous winter records of this species have been made during the past two years by John H. Buckalew, Ira N. Gabrielson, Brooke Meanley, Roger T. Peterson, C. S. Robbins and R. E. Stewart. These records show that this species occurs commonly as a winter resident in the tidal marshes of Somerset and southern Dorchester Counties, and somewhat sparingly in the coastal marshes of Worcester County.

Robert E. Stewart

## AGE AND MIGRATION RECORDS OF MARYLAND BROWN THRASHERS

What ages do birds attain? What is the position of a particular region's migrant breeding birds in the stream of migration through that region; that is, are the birds that will stay and nest the first of their species to arrive in the spring, are they the last, or do they come somewhere in between? Is there uniformity about this? What is the destination of the birds that go on through? These are some of the interesting questions that can be answered only if individual birds can be unmistakably identified and then kept tabs on. They are therefore questions for the bird-bander to answer by study of the birds he has marked with numbered or colored leg-bands. My own banding work has produced some information of this sort on brown thrashers at Baltimore.

Summary of the banding. Between August 3, 1941, and the end of 1946 I banded 20 thrashers--17 adults and three immatures. Sixteen adults and the three immatures were banded (all of these except three adults were also color-banded) by mid-July of 1943 at 3201 Carlisle Avenue, near the edge of some then undeveloped land bordering Hanlon Park; the immatures were probably raised in that area. The other adult was banded in 1945 at 4608 Springdale Avenue, a place on the edge of the Hillsdale golf course to which I moved in mid-1944 and at which thrashers seldom appear.

Of these birds, ten (including eight that were color-banded) have not been seen or heard of since their banding; these were eight adults and two immatures. The other ten yielded the following interesting records:

Six (including one immature) were seen on one or more later days during the year in which they were banded; three (including one of the six just mentioned) were seen again the following year; and one, not seen in Baltimore after its banding, was reported four years later from Connecticut.

In considering my data two things are to be noted. First, my observation of these birds was only casual; I was making no particular study of thrashers, and used color bands merely so that I could identify any of my birds encountered in the course of general field work. Second, it is not to be assumed that a thrasher was necessarily banded on the very day of its arrival in my neighborhood, or seen on the very last day it was present there.

Connecticut recovery; age; spring migration. No. 42-204084, which was banded and color-banded as an adult on May 9, 1943, was never seen again in Baltimore. On June 22, 1947, it was found dead at Milldale, Conn., about 230 miles northeast of Baltimore. This banding yielded information of two types:

1. As this thrasher necessarily was hatched in the summer of 1942 or some earlier year, its age at the time of death was at least five years.
2. Assuming that in 1947 the bird had returned to its breeding territory of previous years--as birds are normally considered to do--

it was on its way to Connecticut when banded in Baltimore in 1943. As in 1943 thrashers first appeared in my neighborhood on April 13, and yet this migrant was only passing through on May 9, the species' migration through Baltimore that spring must have extended over at least 27 days.

Breeder's arrival. One bird gives a date for the arrival of a breeding thrasher. No. 42-204022, banded as an adult on June 24, 1942, and so presumably then a breeding bird, returned in 1943, in which year it was seen from April 14 to June 13. In 1943 the species arrived in my neighborhood on April 13; this breeding bird, therefore, was one of the earliest arrivals--it may, indeed, have arrived the first day, for a thrasher was singing April 13 at the place where I found this one the next day. (The two other birds that were seen again the year after their banding were not located until dates so late in the season that no conclusions can be drawn.)

Breeders' departure. Two birds give some indication how late in the year adult thrashers stay in their breeding neighborhoods. No. 41-225103, banded as an adult on May 29, 1941, (with color band only) and seen in June and July, was last seen September 1 (when trapped again and given a numbered band also). September 1 was the last date on which thrashers were regularly present in my neighborhood that year, although I occasionally recorded them through October 12. No. 42-204023, banded as an adult on June 24, 1942, and so presumably a nester, was last seen September 13. In that year thrashers were regularly present in my neighborhood through September 20, and then occasionally through October 18.

Immature's stay. The length of time that an immature bird spends in the general region of its hatching appears to be indicated by one bird. No. 42-204038, which when banded on July 29, 1942, had a tail only about 1 1/4 inches long and so presumably was a very young bird from my own neighborhood, was retrapped on September 2, then fully grown.

Hervey Brackbill

#### BEHAVIOR OF MALLARDS RELEASED AT McDONOGH

On June 7, 1948, we released a mother mallard with five three-week old ducklings on one pond at McDonogh. Some, if not all, of these still survive. In this wild environment, their behavior contrasts markedly with their brood-mates that are in the propagation area.

On April 25, 1948, we released a male and female mallard on another pond at McDonogh. The male was clipped, the female was not. The male walked all the way home and arrived in time for supper. The female, unclipped, still remains on the pond. A week, later, two males were blindfolded and carried to this pond; one was clipped the other was not. The male that was clipped remains to this date. The other male remained about a week or two and then flew home. After another period, he flew back only to return again a second time. This pair on the lower pond nested but failed to hatch a brood, due to the depredations of some predator, probably a racoon. This pond was constructed just two years ago.

McDonogh Bird Club



## BIRD TRIP ETIQUETTE

A group can reap maximum benefit from a bird trip only if certain principles of conduct and dress are observed. Let us discuss clothes, motion, and noise.

CLOTHES - Type

The clothes for a bird trip should be sturdy and comfortable. Both men and women will find blue jeans or other inconspicuously colored sturdy trousers or slacks to be the most comfortable and appropriate type of apparel. Nylon stockings and silk dresses are entirely too easily torn to be worn on a field trip.

It is often difficult to know how warmly to dress for an all day field trip. In the winter and early spring one is much more likely to wear too few clothes than too many. Even if the temperature is up to fifty degrees, the sun is often obscured and a chilling wind is blowing. A fairly long coat is much warmer than a jacket. If the weather (especially in the late spring and autumn) or one's physiology does not seem to require a coat, the writer recommends wearing one or more sweaters under a thin jacket. This is as warm as a heavy jacket and has the advantage of being adaptable. If the wind subsides and the sun begins to shine brilliantly, one can tie a sweater around one's waist where it will cause almost no extra warmth or inconvenience.

Let us discuss head apparel. If the weather is cold and windy the ears need protection. The writer strongly recommends a triangular wool scarf for women. It keeps the head, ears, and neck warm and yet causes virtually no interference with hearing. Turbans and berets are also acceptable. A hat which leaves the ears exposed is not very good for a January field trip. One might wear a rectangular scarf under the hat in such a manner that the scarf covers the ears. The writer believes that in cold weather men should have a cap which can cover the ears. Good caps are knit ones of the stocking variety, ski caps, and ordinary visor caps that have a flap folded under. One might wear ear muffs and a hat.

Shoes should be sturdy and low heeled. To be comfortable on rough roads and rocks they should have heavy soles, such as women's flat heeled oxfords and all men's shoes have. Some people like high shoes or boots. They give added protection against briars and are a must if one is going into rattlesnake infested country. Some people are able to use high shoes and boots that are too large by wearing heavy wool socks. High shoes should fit snugly after they are laced up. If they are too small or too large they can be very uncomfortable and may cause large, painful blisters. No matter what shoes one is wearing, the socks should fit and should be without holes and without wrinkles.

For wading in shallow water the following are satisfactory: rubber knee boots, galoshes, and pacs (laced boots with rubber extending at least as high as the ankle). Some people are able to waterproof leather high shoes. In deep water hip or waist boots may be used, but they are hot and heavy. In warm weather tennis shoes are usually more satisfactory.

#### CLOTHES - Color

White, red, orange, and purple occur in nature, but they are too conspicuous to wear on bird trips. Certain hummingbirds apparently distinguish color. If offered a series of syrup feeders each of which is covered by a different color of paper, the hummingbird chooses the feeder which matches the color of its favorite flower (Wagner 1946). Since most birds are repelled by people rather than being attracted to them, the bird watcher stands the best chance of seeing birds if the birds scarcely realize that he is present. Hence, gray, brown, black, khaki, navy blue, and dark green are the best colors to wear on bird trips. The writer has heard a leader claim that because a woman wore a coat of large yellow and black checks, the group saw very few birds.

#### MOTION

The writer has sometimes been walking quite rapidly through a woods which seemed completely lacking in bird life. If she sat down to rest she was frequently surprised to note that several birds soon came into view. Bird enthusiasts may well form a habit of "freezing" as soon as a bird note is heard. A number of birds may be in the vicinity. When approaching a bird, even when pointing out a bird, move slowly. One member of a group may see a bird. If he jerks his hand out to point to it and shouts in jubilation, he will probably be the only member of the group to see it. More than one group has been disappointed that only the leader saw a rare species because somebody jerked his field glasses up to his eyes so fast that the bird flew.

As a rule dogs should be left at home since they frequently run ahead and frighten away the birds before the people can see them.

#### NOISE

Birds are usually less frightened by noise than by motion. Noise sometimes excites them just enough to make them readily visible to a group of people. Most leaders of bird trips use the "squeak", a sound supposed to resemble young or injured birds. The "squeak" is more effective in the nesting season than at any other time. Some people can make a noise resembling a house wren's call (McGuire 1937). This is said to be more effective than a squeak.

In the migration season the writer has watched Mr. Aretas A. saunders imitate the black-capped chickadee and thereby call a flock of chickadees and migrating warblers down around the heads of the bird-watchers. Mr. Saunders and others have had success attracting cardinals, wood pewees, orioles, scarlet tanagers, and other birds by imitating the songs of the respective birds. This writer has found that at certain times almost any whistled call may attract chickadees, warblers, nuthatches, sparrows, and other birds better than a "queak". However, when on a trip with a group, it is best to let the leader call the birds. When walking with a group of bird enthusiasts it is usually best to avoid all loud and unnecessary conversation. If the conversation does not actually frighten the birds away, it distracts one's attention, so that one is not in a good position to notice and recognize a bird. Remember that the more experienced bird watchers depend a great deal on song and call notes when identifying birds in the field. If the group is making much noise many birds will be missed. When the leader stops to listen that should be a signal for the others to listen also.

Eleanor Cooley Robbins

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#### A MEMBER REPORTS FROM NEW ZEALAND

(Mrs. John Campbell White, our Kent Island member whose home, "Barnstable Hill", looks out over duck-frequented estuaries of the section of the island south of the village of Chester, returned recently from a trip to New Zealand. She was on the look-out for birds there, and writes us:)

We saw lots of interesting birds in New Zealand. There were many sea birds, including a small variety of penguin that swims under water like a fish, then comes to the surface and says "Quack!"

On shore we saw the weka, the Maori woodhen (wingless), and in captivity we saw the famous kiwi and a primitive kind of parrot called (I think) a caw-caw. In the South Island we also saw Paradise ducks, the female of which has a white head, and native pigeons. We heard, as well as saw, the famous bell bird. I missed the tui - a kind of magpie, black and white like ours and with a somewhat similar song.

There are quite a number of introduced birds, including the stunning black Australian swan with its flashing white wings, and Canada geese. There is also a sweet yellow tomtit with a black head and plaintive whistle; I believe this is also an introduced species as there are very few small native birds, the islands being very far away from any continent.

Elizabeth Moffat White  
(Mrs. John Campbell White)



## SPECIAL ARTICLES

## The Season ~

November - December 1948

Unusually warm weather throughout November, and through most of December delayed the departure of the southern herons, shorebirds, and many of the more hardy land bird migrants, making bird observation particularly interesting for this time of year. Not only were the mean Washington temperatures for November and December  $6.3^{\circ}$  and  $3.5^{\circ}$  above normal, respectively, but there was no severe weather at all until Dec. 26. Although the late December cold snap froze most of the shallow water throughout the state and sent many belated transients southward, more half-hardy birds than ever before were found on the Christmas counts. Eleven observers identified 123 species on the Ocean City count on Dec. 27; this was not only the sixth highest count in the country, but the highest ever published north of southern North Carolina.

Grebes, Herons. In spite of the fine flight of Holboell's grebes in the spring, this species was as scarce as usual in the fall; 2 seen in the Ocean City inlet on Dec. 27 by Gabrielson and Robbins were the only ones reported. Pied-bills continued commoner than usual, 25 being seen at Perry Pt. on Nov. 14 by the D. C. Audubon Society. The late December figures were particularly impressive; a total of 12 pied-bills were recorded on four Christmas Counts, whereas but a single bird had been found the previous year. The last Am. egret reported from the Western Shore was seen on Nov. 2 at Chalk Point near Churchton, Anne Arundel Co., by E. John Besson. They stayed much later in the marshes of the lower Eastern Shore, however; Robert Stewart and Clark Webster counted 15 on Nov. 19 at Elliott Is., where 1 individual remained on Dec. 28 (Elting Arnold, T. W. Donnelly). Edward LaFleur's observation of 2 snowy egrets on the Patapsco River flats on Nov. 6 is the latest on record for the State, as is a green heron noted by Brooke Meanley on Nov. 20 at Blackwater Refuge. The finding of 3 Am. bitterns at Elliott Is. on Nov. 17 (Stewart, Webster) also reflects the late season; 1 was seen at Wesley, near Blackwater Refuge, on Dec. 28 (Robbins).

Waterfowl. Although recorded but once in Maryland prior to 1927, the blue goose has been found on several occasions in recent years. There were more than the usual number of records from the Appalachian and Middle Atlantic States this fall, and 2 adults were seen in Maryland: Seth Low and Elting Arnold found the first in a large flock of Canada geese at South Pt. on Dec. 27, and Low observed the other on the following day at Blackwater Refuge. Brant are continuing to increase at a rapid rate; Low and Arnold estimated 10,000 off South Pt. on Dec. 27, and local hunters declared there were twice as many brant as last year. Stewart and Webster reported a peak of 10,000 black ducks in the Elliott Is. marshes, Nov. 12-13. Several high counts of the gadwall were made; Stewart and Springer found 245 on Dec. 11 on the Wicomico River south of LaPlata, and 1,000 were estimated in the Potomac River west of Cobb Is., Md., on

Dec. 26 by Low and F. M. Uhler. Willoughby and Taylor found 18 on the latter date on the Sassafras River--a good winter count for Cecil County. The rare European widgeon was seen on Nov. 13 at Blackwater Refuge (Theodore Hake, Steele Webster), and on Dec. 26 at the Sassafras River (Willoughby, Taylor). The shoveller, rare in winter, was seen on Dec. 26 in southern Cecil County (15 by Willoughby & Taylor), and on the next day in Sinepuxent Bay (3, Low & Arnold). Willoughby and Taylor also recorded 425 ring-necked ducks in southern Cecil Co. on Dec. 26--a most unusual number. Stewart and Springer found 4,250 ruddy ducks in the Morgantown region on Dec. 11, but on Dec. 26 only 1,400 were noted.

Hawks, Rails. The rough-legged hawk, found on only 2 Christmas Counts in 1947, was observed on 5 this year. Two or 3 clapper rails were recorded at Elliott Is. in mid-November, along with 6 to 10 Virginia rails, but none of the former species was found at Christmas.

Shorebirds. Among more than 850 shorebirds of 11 species on the Ocean City Christmas Count, Dec. 27, 32 black-bellied plover, 1 ruddy turnstone (Low, Arnold), 14 purple sandpipers, 5 least sandpipers, 305 red-backed sandpipers, 10 western sandpipers (1 collected) and 366 sanderlings deserve mention because of high counts or scarcity of records at this season. The turnstone was more than 6 weeks after the latest previous departure date. Another late record was submitted by Stewart and Clark Webster, who saw 15 dowitchers at Elliott Is. on Nov. 20. A lesser yellow-legs seen at Winter's Run, Harford Co., on Nov. 14 by the Audubon Soc., was the latest on record for the State until Seth Low found 5 of this species at Blackwater, Dec. 28.

Gulls and Terns. Laughing gulls were last noted on Nov. 14 on the Sassafras River and at Chalk Pt.; a single bird seen on Dec. 31 at Claibourne by Taylor and W. M. Davidson constitutes the northernmost winter record in Chesapeake Bay. Nov. 13 was a late date for 15 Forster's terns at Cambridge (A.J.Duvall); and a Caspian tern at Matapeake on Dec. 22 was a new late record (T. W. Donnelly).

Cuckoos, Flycatchers, Swallows. Another late straggler was a yellow-billed cuckoo, whose full call was heard by Frank C. Cross at Forest Glen on Nov. 21. A late phoebe at Denton on Nov. 26 (Roberta Fletcher) and 2 at Seneca on Dec. 12 (K.H.Weber, I.R.Barnes, D.M. Thatcher) are worthy of mention. Forty barn swallows seen at Ocean City by Weber on Nov. 6 are of special interest. Ludlow Griscom (Audubon Field Notes 3:5) tells how the barn swallow had left New England particularly early in September this year, and was subsequently blown back north by a series of early November storms; birds seen arriving from the south at Cape Cod on Nov. 7, and birds at Cape Ann on Nov. 8 were doubtless part of this same flight.

Wrens, Mockers. Haven Kolb found a belated house wren at Loch Raven on Dec. 11. Still more surprising were single birds found in the Pocomoke swamp below Willards on Dec. 27 (Donnelly) and at Blackwater Refuge on Dec. 28; never before had this species been recorded in Maryland in December. Another interesting report concerned a

short-billed marsh wren which Messrs. Shelton, Baldwin, and Donnelly observed at Kent Narrows on Dec. 22. Not recognized as a winter resident in Maryland until the last few years, this species is now known to winter regularly in the marshes of Dorchester and Somerset Counties. Further observation will probably show that it winters at least sparingly north to Kent Narrows. Christmas records of the catbird in St. Marys, Dorchester, and Worcester Counties, were not out of the ordinary, but 1 at Chase, Dec. 26, is unusual (Hampe). A brown thrasher found at Chase on Dec. 26 by H. F. Kuch is also of interest.

Thrushes, Pipits. Brooke Meanley obtained another late record for the State when he found a wood thrush in College Park on Nov. 14. Pipits were exceptionally abundant in late December; 1,276 were recorded on 7 Christmas Counts, as compared with 220 on 2 counts last year. Nearly every coastal plain census reported this species.

Warblers. A late yellow palm warbler was found at Chalk Pt., Anne Arundel Co., on Nov. 14 by Jeanne Stivers. Brooke Meanley identified a Connecticut warbler at College Park on the exceedingly late date of Nov. 7, 2 weeks after the latest previous record. On Nov. 6 Gorman Bond found a dead Wilson's warbler at Elkridge, but it was so badly decomposed that the date of death could not be told.

Blackbirds. On Dec. 26, Willoughby and Taylor checked on the number of red-wings and grackles using the Cecil County roost. By arriving on the south shore of the Sassafras River before dawn and then observing the entire flight again at sunset as the birds approached the north shore of the river, they were able to make 2 separate estimates. Their best approximation of the total number of birds observed was expressed in the round number 1,000,000. Judging by the red-wing - grackle ratio of the nearer flocks, red-wings were estimated to make up 80 percent of the total.

Finches and Sparrows. This was a poor season for northern finches. Even the familiar purple finch was unaccountably scarce. There was a fairly good fall flight of pine siskins, however, and scattered individuals or flocks remained to the end of the period. The highest late December count was 100 in the Pocomoke swamp on Dec. 27 (Meanley). The white-crowned sparrow appears to be extending its winter range into Maryland. Leonard Llewellyn, who has been observing and banding birds at McCool, Allegany Co., for many years, first found this species in the winter of 1947-48, when about 35 immatures wintered in the immediate vicinity of his home. This year a count on Dec. 28 yielded 16 individuals (13 on a similar count last year). A few were also seen both years by Seth Low at his home near Unity, Montgomery Co. Observers throughout the mountain and piedmont sections of the State should be on the lookout for wintering white-crowns. The Lincoln's sparrow is another species not previously reported from Maryland in winter; one was carefully observed at Berlin on Dec. 27 by John Willoughby.

C. S. Robbins

## BIRD LIFE ON DRUID LAKE IN 1948

On the edge of 600-acre Druid Hill Park, once listed by Baedeker as one of Baltimore's two places of fame, lies Druid Lake, 53 acres of water surface with a depth of 20 to 65 feet, 217 feet above tide-water, with its long axis running northwest to southeast. If you care to walk or drive the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles around the lake, a favorite diversion for Baltimoreans, you can see and study at close range many bird visitors.

All winter long, one to two hundred mature and immature herring and ring-billed gulls bathe and sun themselves during the day, returning at night to the harbor or river. On March 17, they left for their nesting grounds, and returned in late October. A thrilling sight for anyone was the flock of 20 Bonaparte gulls on April 14. Common loons were seen in both nuptial and winter plumages in April and May, and two of them stayed on the lake from November 11 to December 24. Pied-billed grebes, horned grebes, even a Canada goose, visited the lake.

A family of buffle-heads, one male, one female and five immatures, were a delight to the eye, while a pair of ring-necked ducks and 2 red-heads made Columbus Cove their temporary home. Scaup, ruddy, black, golden-eye, old squaw and a white-winged scoter came singly or in groups.

The lake is also a boon for the student of swallows and chimney swifts. During exceptionally cool weather the last week in April and first week in May, hundreds of barn, rough-winged and tree swallows flew round and round, up and down, with the chimney swifts. Martins were seen, too, and there were wonderful views of tired cliff swallows. The rough-wings nested in crevices of the stone outlet tower.

A pair of killdeer nested on the stones above the water's edge, with one parent on constant one-legged guard on a stone fence pillar. Mourning doves came to bathe or drink, as did the robins, house sparrows, crows, starlings, brown thrashers and grackles. A pair of nesting sparrow hawks had their favorite perching spots on the stone fence pillars. Myrtle warblers everywhere one May morning, and a family of five flickers clinging to the fence in the September sunshine bring bright recollections.

Just a pleasant drive, morning and afternoon, to and from my work, a comfortable seat and a handy pair of binoculars -- and 33 species of birds and I are better acquainted.

Pearl Heaps

BIRD IDENTIFICATION KEY: Mr. Theodore Buck, Jr., has prepared and copyrighted a pocket sized form which promises to fill a vacant niche in bird-watchers' supplies. One side has spaces to record details of visual observation of a bird; the other provides outline shapes of a typical bird so that field noted colors may be recorded. In a later issue we shall illustrate the form and offer suggestions for its use.



## ALLEGANY ACTIVITIES

The Junior Leader's Council met November 6th at the Central Y.M.C.A. in Cumberland. This is a group of Juniors from all over Allegany County, composed of the boys and girls who attended the Junior Nature Camp last June at Town Hill Lodge, together with others chosen by their individual junior bird clubs. The purpose of the Junior Leader's Council is to plan activities for the various junior clubs, and to give individual help to those most interested. The group of about 38 was divided into three interest groups - bird walks, club activities, and camp planning. Members of the Allegany County Bird Club in charge of the Council are Miss Nan Livingstone, Miss Mae Meese, Miss Nellis Thomas and Mrs. Gilbert M. Miller.

MONTHLY MEETING, November 10, at Cumberland Public Library. President Kendrick Y. Hodgdon brought two interesting visitors to the November meeting - two coots which had come down in a field near Lonaconing. They had been easily captured uninjured, and were turned free later. They afforded us an excellent opportunity to study an unusual bird closely. The meeting program was devoted to feeding stations. Different types of feeders were displayed, feeding suggestions offered, and a letter read from Mr. Joseph Minke, game warden, saying he would bring feed to the club upon request. Group singing was led by Miss Helen Kreiling.

MONTHLY MEETING, December 8, at Cumberland Public Library. This entire meeting was used to discuss the coming Christmas Count. Details of procedure were described, the return forms examined, and a comparison made with the 1947 count. A question and answer program was a feature of the evening.

MONTHLY MEETING, January 12, at Cumberland Public Library. Ken Hodgdon led a discussion of reports of the Christmas bird count. Comparison of the 1947 and 1948 counts proved interesting, and it was noted that four species were reported this year which were not on the 1947 list: mallard duck, turkey vulture, screech owl, and yellow-bellied sapsucker. There were 31 species reported this year, covering 846 individuals. Six separate groups participated in the count, the total number of observers being 31. Aside from English sparrows and starlings, juncos proved most numerous (119 individuals), with the next in order being cardinals (51), field sparrows (47), chickadees (44) and robins (35).

Helen B. (Mrs. Gilbert M.) Miller



## CLUB EVENTS

NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING: ALL ABOUT EAGLES. This was one of those occasions when something completely fascinating catches you by surprise. In spite of the advance announcements and the resulting large attendance, we were simply captured by the personality of our speaker and the interesting material he delivered.

Charles L. Broley, the widely known "Eagle Man" of Florida banding fame, was on the way south for another season of banding. His stay with us - both for the lecture and for the next day's field trip - are bright memories. Mr. Broley described his now famous banding work in some detail, showed color pictures of many of his nests and of his method of climbing tall trees, and made a real hit with the audience when he displayed his amazing collection of things taken from eagle nests.

Mr. Broley is a retired Canadian bank manager, now 69 years of age, who, like other retired bankers, spends his winters in Florida - but right there the similarity ends. Instead of basking in the sun, he puts in his time climbing 100-foot Florida trees, struggling with sharp-taloned occupants of eagle nests, and consequently solving many long-standing problems of eagle migration. He has banded over 1,000 eagles in this fashion, and returns from some 90 birds have established for the first time the unsuspected long-distance migration of this species.

It was a stop-over in Washington in 1938, to attend meetings of the American Ornithologists' Union, that brought Broley into contact with Dick Pough, Audubon stalwart and unflinching champion of the good character of birds of prey. Pough wanted information on the eagles which nest by thousands in the area around Tampa, and soon Broley was set up with U. S. Government bands, information on methods and plenty of enthusiasm.

In Florida, instead of hiring a boy to climb trees for him, he bought a few hundred feet of manila rope, made climbing ladders and went to work. In January, 1939, he banded his first eagle. Four months later, eyebrows went up in Washington when a Broley band was returned from New York state, hundreds of miles north of the nesting grounds. The following year, bands came back from Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and the mystery of eagle migration was beginning to dissolve.

At the meeting, Mr. Broley made it clear that the eagle is a much maligned bird. He pointed out that its diet was predominantly of fish, and that there is no evidence that it ever raids barnyards. He once found chicken heads in a nest, and his heart sank, but he soon discovered that they came from a nearby poultry farm where the chickens had been killed and the heads discarded within the eagle's feeding territory.

The meeting was a great success, and we feel that we have made another good friend whom we hope to welcome back to Maryland many times in the future.

CHASE FIELD TRIP, NOVEMBER 7. The eagle enthusiasm ran on into the field trip, on which the birds themselves were outdone by Mr. Broley's exhibition of how he climbs trees. At the Crowder cabin on Bird River, Mr. Broley drew forth his trusty slingshot, put a lead weight over the top of a towering oak, and soon had a line and rope ladder up to a high crotch. We held our breath, fearing he had picked Maryland as a spot to end his famous career, but up he went nimbly enough to belie his nearly 70 years.

Earlier that morning, as we disembarked from our cars at Bengies Point to start the trip, someone shouted and pointed overhead to two beautiful bald eagles wheeling in the sunlight. We accused Mr. Broley of having pets which followed him wherever he traveled. A few minutes later, it was his turn to gasp, for we came upon one of our fine flocks of several thousand baldpates on Dundee Creek - more ducks than our visitor had ever seen at one time in his long life. Scaup, ruddies and black ducks were also plentiful. There were good views of a flock of pipits, and the usual winter land birds brought the total to 31 species. During lunch at Bird River, our 35 observers sat munching sandwiches while a greater yellowlegs paraded up and down the shore line in front of us.

BOMBAY HOOK FIELD TRIP, NOVEMBER 21. Forty species greeted us on this visit to the Delaware Bay marshes. There were 5 kinds of hawks, horned and pied-billed grebes, a late American egret, our first flocks of tree sparrows, and 9 species of ducks, including some excellent views of gadwalls and shovellers.

MONTHLY MEETING, DECEMBER 3. Our good friend and member, Bryant Tyrrell, made the December meeting a highly enjoyable experience with his beautiful color films of birds of the Bay of Fundy. We also managed, after several postponements, to see the extremely interesting stroboscopic ultra-slow-motion picture "One Second in the Life of a Hummingbird".

BACK RIVER GULL TRIP, DECEMBER 5. No one thought that the often smelly sewage disposal plant on Back River would be particularly popular, but the 18 people who followed Ted Buck's and Lester Wood's leadership on this venture spent almost as much time on the workings of the plant as on the bird life. The gulls, which congregate here in great numbers, proved no disappointment. Herring Gulls and ring-bills combined for a total of 4,000 to 20,000 individuals, depending upon whose estimates you accept. Thousands of starlings were competing with the gulls in this dubious feeding area, and we had a long look at a perching immature black-crowned night heron.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS COUNT, DECEMBER 26. Haven Kolb and Gorman Bond directed another successful round-up of birds this year in our traditional Christmas-count area between Middle and Gunpowder Rivers. Twenty-one observers took part, listed 55 species, counted over 30,000 waterfowl and nearly 800 other birds. Of special interest were the number of swan (400), the roughlegged hawk, a catbird and a brown thrasher.